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September 2020 Newsletter Keeping the Fort

I'm going to ~~steal~~ borrow adapt an idea from my presiding bishop, who a few years ago launched an initiative within my church body. He called it "Keeping the Fort, Taking the Frontier."

The Church has often been pictured as a place of safety in the midst of a sinful and chaotic world. Even in church architecture, the place that we often call the "sanctuary" (a holy place of safety) is more often called the "nave," a word meaning "boat." It's the ark of safety.

We are certainly a minority in the community. Even if you gathered all the people who attend churches, in virtually any part of the United States, you would collect only a small portion of the total population. In the collegiate communities the proportion is typically a little smaller than in the general public. We say everyone is welcome to come to church or to any sort of our ministry activities, and they are. But what would happen if everyone did, all at once? In the city where I live, we would quickly exceed the number of people the health department allows in gatherings. A little less quickly we would exceed fire code occupancy numbers for buildings. God is good, but we would be scrambling to accommodate everyone. I, for one, would like to have this problem.



(photo: David Pogue)

In this fort of the Church, whether in our churchly facilities or in other places, we act as guardians of souls. We nurture those who are hurting, those who are weak, those who have been broken by the trials of sin. We care for the poor in whatever ways we can. We encourage the saints who are strong in Christ, making them stronger. We defend the historic teachings of Christianity, showing that in the words and actions passed down from God through the apostles and prophets, and reaching eventually to us, we have Jesus' words of life and are suited to guard against all the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Why do we think this fortress will stand? It is founded on the Rock of God. Christ is the cornerstone. God himself has built us together as living stones. All this is accomplished by the Word of God which will not pass away. And as Jesus says, He will build His Church and even the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

How can we work to keep the fort?

We bring the pure grace of God to the saints, day after day and week after week, in Word and Sacrament.

We communicate with one another. When someone is in need, we can then step up with extra care.

We pray for one another.

We encourage everyone to find identity in Christ, which is the secure identity that can never be shaken.

We bring our offerings, including financial gifts, gifts of service, and offerings of prayers, concerns, fears, and needs, before the Lord, trusting that He knows exactly what to do with all of them.

Though there are surely other parts of keeping the fort that I have not listed, as the British say, “that’s enough to be getting on with for now.” By God’s grace, then, let us build up His body, wherever we assemble, in our local congregations and as Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry.

Next month we can talk about taking the frontier. For now, let us be strong and courageous in the blessed fellowship of the saints. Grace and peace to you!

Wittenberg Door Financial Update

For July and August, expenses for the ministry remained relatively low and giving was stable. In September, thus far, expenses have risen slightly, mostly due to University facilities discouraging loitering. It costs a little more to loiter in a regular coffee shop or restaurant, but it’s still a lot cheaper than trying to rent office space!

Last month I spoke about a vacancy position in a nearby community. My work with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Centralia, Missouri is going on. I spend about half my time serving that congregation and half working with Wittenberg Door. I’ve had the opportunity to talk with the congregation about the mission work I do in Columbia. It looks like we’re working together well, and the compensation they are providing has been very helpful.

My prayer remains that the congregation would grow in numbers and in grace, and that when they are able to call a permanent pastor they will have gained from our time together.

We still need additional contributors. Our goal remains to have a total of about 300 monthly individual contributors or about 30 churches or organizations, each representing about the equivalent of 10 monthly donors. We are realistically a little over 60% of the support we need to be fiscally responsible in the long run. We’ve made it thus far, by God’s grace, for which we are thankful.

If you or people you know want to support the work of bringing on-site, face to face, pastoral care to our academic communities, please consider making Wittenberg Door a part of your regular charitable giving. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Checks mailed to us are deposited with no commission paid to any intermediary. Most of our contributions are actually received this way, but we can receive funds sent through Paypal or Google Pay as well. Giving is easy! Simply visit our website at www.wittenbergcomo.com and click on “about” and “support us.”

Uganda Update:

Our friends at Eleos Ministries have continued providing information about some of the particular situations in the areas where they are active in Uganda. There are several different groups of people in different areas. Here are three needs that Eleos has identified, along with specifics of their work. They would love to pair a church congregation up with a community in Uganda. Even a small congregation could make a huge difference in the lives and opportunities available to the Christians in Mirembe, Ishongororo, or Rwamwanja.

Mirembe

One of the saddest situations we’ve come across, Mirembe is a small village in very rural Uganda. About twenty families lost their homes and land, and many also lost loved ones in a recent flood (May 2020). Eleos Ministries is working with a small group of 20 families who lost everything. They are really struggling to survive and a child has already, tragically, passed away from malnutrition.



Needs: food assistance, medical assistance, help rebuilding homes

Ishongororo

A small, poverty-stricken village in a remote part of Uganda, Ishongororo is full of beauty and full of need. Many of the children are not educated at all, and most adults cannot read.

Needs: mentors, food assistance, encouragement and prayer



Rwamwanja Refugee Camp

Historically, when charities work in refugee camps, it is not considered a success. However, Eleos Ministries uses a “mentor” model, and it achieves much more success. Although the

refugee camp itself is enormous, we are focused on only a small portion and trying to pair refugees with mentors who can support and love them through these hard times they are facing. The refugees are war refugees from surrounding African countries, and many will never return home or be integrated into Uganda society.

Needs: mentors, food aid, medical assistance.



Upcoming Activities:

Thursdays at 12:30 pm – Lunch and Learn Bible discussion live and via Zoom

Saturdays 11:00 am Matins service via Zoom

Watch the calendar for times and places where Pastor Spotts can be found around campuses in coffee shops or restaurants!

We are having occasional picnics in a local park, depending on weather and health department requirements. Drop Pastor Spotts a text asking to be included in notices.

Sundays, 10:00 a.m. Pastor Spotts at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Centralia MO

We always have something new at the website, the blog, and the activities calendar. Please be a friend on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. If you're in Columbia, let's get together on or near campus. Go to <https://www.wittenbergcomo.com/support-us.html> to provide financial support. The Wittenberg Door 300 needs you!